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the next chapter—the Indians began to arrive, and the hunting was resumed; only, however, when absolutely necessary. Some of the new arrivals proceeded to the wild cattle district, and managed to kill a bull, although—as before—an accident occurred. As my lazo was used to capture the bull, I came in for a share of the meat, which was divided amongst the people in our toldo; but it proved very tough, and rather nasty. Perhaps the palate, having been so long accustomed to guanaco, ostrich, or horse, could not relish meat of a coarser description; but the hide was invaluable for making maneos and other horse-gear. On the 7th of January a messenger arrived from Casimiro requesting me to send him some information, and stating that he was distant some three marches, and wished to wait some time to refresh his horses, &c. After consulting with Orkeke and Jackechan, we sent back a messenger to say that, 'As game was scarce now in the vicinity of Teckel, and all were more or less desirous of pushing forward, he had better make haste and join us, otherwise we should continue our march towards Las Manzanas.' This message had the desired effect, as on the 11th he made his appearance, with several other toldos, a few only remaining in the rear with Crimè, who was reported to be unwell.

On Casimiro's arrival, as he now possessed a good toldo, I changed my quarters to his residence, as agreed on at the outset of the journey. I was sorry to leave Orkeke, and the old man was very much grieved, a present of a revolver only troubling him the more, as he informed me that he had nothing to offer in exchange; however, my assurance that I did not give him a present expecting an exchange, as is customary with Indians, appeared to console him. The usual consultation of the chiefs took place, in which all the preceding arrangements were agreed to, and we remained stationary in Teckel until January 20. As I had by this time become well acquainted with the mode of life and usages of the Tehuelches, and was looked upon as one of them-

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123 selves—and in fact had acquired a position and influence among them—it may be as well to call a halt, and devote a chapter to a description of the manners and customs of the Tsonecas or Tehuelches, as Patagonians call themselves.

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624 my joy, the chief took the same view as in the former council. Would he be able to restrain their savage tempers? His power was great, but there was a limit to its effect, and I feared. In my turn I sought to enforce his views, by arraying all the motives invention could produce, and was able to perceive that they had some weight. Again the matter was canvassed around the ring. There was a hesitation, as if they felt suspicious and unsatisfied. Then they began to cross-examine me; my promises were not explicit enough. What did I mean to give them? The answer did not content them; they wanted more. More or less made no difference to me, and I gave them assurance of all the good things they craved, when we should arrive at *Holland*. Another talk followed, and brought them to a pretty unanimous conclusion, that they would get the presents first, and *decide my fate afterwards;* — a "squeeze-your-orange-and-throw-it-away" policy, in which these rascals seemed to be remarkable adepts.

●123 The natives had no idea that I could understand their talk, and I was not at all eager to display my acquisitions. In fact, though unable to speak their jargon, my ear had become pretty well trained to interpret it, while my scraps of half Spanish enabled me, without suspicion, to hear, mark and digest, much of their conversation. This was, in part, acquired in teaching some of them, the youth especially, to speak English and to count, — a pursuit in which I engaged partly for their benefit, and partly for my own. Besides aiding me in learning their language, it tended, so far as it diverted their attention, to keep mischief out of their heads, after the manner in which constant employment maintains order in a ship's crew. It added to my knowl-

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edge of their character and ways of thinking, so that, in dangerous emergencies, I was able to detect the first symptoms of evil. More than once it enabled me to elude or to nip in the bud dangerous conspiracies, which, if they had gone further, might have proved fatal to me. Circumspection made self-possession more easy. I will confess — though the narrative may have made confession needless — that I am naturally timid, and inclined to the better part of valor. Yet somehow — God helping me — I early learned to hide my constitutional timidity under a show of fearlessness, even in circumstances of great peril. More than once, when a savage drew his knife at me, have I looked him in the eye and disarmed him by a laugh; perhaps laying hold of the instrument of death, trying its edge and praising its qualities, till its owner was shamed into quiet. One piece of English that tickled the chief was the title of "Old Boy," with which (from a conviction of its appropriateness) I early honored him, and which he appeared to relish as much as if I had called him "His Majesty."

The council, to my great relief, at length broke up, and I returned to my wretched shelter. The chief pointed to my bed, and bade me lie down. I complied, not to sleep, but to adore the Providence that had twice rescued me as from the very jaws of death, to reflect on the past and to speculate on the future. The excitement of the evening kept me wakeful, and the night wore away and the morning dawned, without sleep for a moment visiting my eyes.

poles from top to bottom and make firm partitions. On the outside 342
the hide touches the ground on the north, west and south. The entrance
is always left facing east and is as wide as the entire tent, which is in
the shape of an oval cave. Nothing whatever is placed at the entrance
to close it except [80] in freezing weather, when it is closed by hanging
a hide across it. The inner partitions are arranged from the center to- 342
ward the back for each married couple, and the children and other 592
family members and relatives sleep all in a jumble in the remaining
part which is no man's land up to the door. Here widowers, widows,
unmarried men and women, relatives, servants and slaves and, in fact,
as many as are dependent on or related to the head or master of the
tent, come together. Virgins here, in spite of the opportunity try, as 836
has been said, to keep their virginity while they have hope of getting 837
married; but if they should lose this hope they will take any man
indiscriminately, and they and the widows spend the night merrily,
taking up with the first man who cares to sleep with them.

Quarrels between men belonging to the same camp are decided 627
by coming to blows with their fists and hands. They are not allowed to 578
use any weapons, and no one dares to separate them until they give in
or separate on their own accord. The onlookers applaud them and
laugh. When women fight they begin in a sitting posture, to say of- [516]
fensive words to each other until one of them starts to unbraid her hair
very calmly, at which the other does likewise, still keeping up the flow
of insults. As soon as both have loosed their hair, they shake it, get up
and charge furiously, tugging hard on each other's hair and yanking out
as much of it as they can as it tangles in their nails. The other women
and men just look at them, not daring to pull them apart. When they
become exhausted they themselves separate and are as good friends as
a result of this as though they had not fought. They allow their hair to
remain loose for the remainder of the day. The women may not strike
each other in their fights with hands or fists as do the men, nor may
they pull or tear each other's clothes, only their hair, and should they
do otherwise they are corrected by the surrounding spectators.

In time of sorrow, on the march, on very windy days, when it 302
is very cold or freezing, the Indians paint their faces black or violet, 751
the men as well as the women, to keep their skin from chapping.

Usually these Indians are of a sweet and innocent nature, and [157]
they became so attached to me and they treated me with such simplic- 123
ity, especially the chief of San Julian, that had we had enough horses
I believe there would not be a span of those lands which I would not
have been able to explore in their company.

Buenos Aires, December 10, 1783
Antonio de Viedma [81]